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FREQUENCY OF FLU-LIKE SYMPTOMS AND THE CONCERNS ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN GRADUATE MEDICAL STUDENTS FROM ALL BRAZILIAN REGIONS - A REAL LIFE STUDY

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BACKGROUND

Considering the difficulties to perform the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) diagnosis in Brazil, related to lack of resources for a massive testing, the social isolation was chosen as suitable strategy to mitigate the community transmission of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infection. The aim of the study was to describe the self-reported symptoms and how the COVID-19 diagnosis was performed in medical students who were participating of Mário Pinotti II (MPII) study compared to other medical students not involved in this voluntary activity.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A web-based survey was carried out to perform a cross-sectional assessment and the data were collected using a Google Forms platform, after consent from the participants and released by email and/or WhatsApp message, from July 20th to August 31st, 2020. The questionnaire included demographic data, participants' reporting symptoms and/or diagnosis of COVID-19, including information on their households, as well worries on themselves or their household contacts getting sick or die. The Brazilian Ministry of Health (BMH) criteria were used to define lab or epidemiological COVID-19 diagnosis. The clinically confirmed COVID-19 criterion was not used.

RESULTS

A total of 684 medical students age 18 to 39 years (median = 23 years) were enrolled in this study. Most of them were female (63%) and single marital status (97%). During the pandemic, 84% were living with their families. One-hundred thirty-eight (20%) of them had self-reported flu symptoms and 154 had epidemiological household contact with confirmed uncomplicated COVID-19. Considering the symptomatic cases, the viral transmission way was: household (48%), community (42%) and into the hospital (10%). Sixty-three (9.2%) medical students were diagnosed as positive COVID-19, according to the BMH criteria. Most of them (81%) became apprehensive concerning risk of transmission for their parents and siblings or worries about moderate-severe forms (88%).

CONCLUSIONS

Our data showed high frequency of flu symptoms in medical students but with low frequency of testing. Although being young people, they had high awareness about risks of the disease and transmission, according to the epidemiological scenario.